

WASHINGTON DC – Today, Representative Michael Honda (CA-15), Chairman Emeritus of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, introduced a bipartisan resolution honoring United States veterans who were held as prisoners of war during World War II.

The resolution commemorates the courageous and faithful men and women who were taken as U.S. POWs in the Pacific. It also commends the Government of Japan for the steps it has taken to provide some justice to former U.S. POWs, recognizes America's strong alliance with Japan and calls on the private Japanese companies that profited from U.S. POW labor to apologize and support programs for lasting remembrance and reconciliation.

**“I have long felt that Congress has a moral obligation to honor the men and women who suffered grave injustices during World War II,” said Rep. Honda. “With fewer than 500 surviving POWs alive today, I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in making this small, but significant, gesture to show these brave men and women that Congress has not forgotten about their experience and sacrifice, and that we appreciate Japan for the steps it has taken.”**

During World War II, an estimated 27,000 men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces were captured by Imperial Japan's military. These American POWs were subjected to brutal and inhumane conditions and forced labor, and nearly 40 percent perished.

**“I wholeheartedly support this resolution, as it reminds both Japanese and Americans that no apology is ever too late and that justice for American veterans cements the postwar peace and friendship between the U.S. and Japan,” said 90-year-old Dr. Lester Tenney, a former U.S. POW and survivor of the Bataan Death March. Tenney served as the last National Commander of the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor and as a Chairman of Care Packages From Home, a nationally recognized non-profit organization that sends boxes of necessities to U.S. troops serving overseas. “I urge Congress to pass this Resolution as soon as possible as 66 years is too long for this injustice to American veterans to go unacknowledged and unresolved. Because of Japan's apology for the abuse of us American POWs, it is now easy for me to acknowledge a true feeling of friendship between our two countries.”**

Dr. Tenney went on to reflect on the importance of Congress taking up this resolution. “Sixty-six years is a long time to wait for an apology, and it is unfortunate that not many POWs are left to hear it. But it is important for Congress to acknowledge Japan's reconciliation efforts and to encourage its great companies to follow suit. This resolution reassures us veterans that no matter the passage of time or how distant an injustice, Congress will stand by us. This resolution reminds us that the US-Japan Alliance has its history and its obligations. Passage is critical to both American veterans and to the Japanese for the respect of both.”

The Government of Japan (GOJ) has, in recent years, taken positive steps to address this issue. Last year, Japan's Ambassador to the U.S., Ichiro Fujisaki, delivered an apology on behalf of the GOJ at a U.S. POW convention. This welcome apology was historic, demonstrating that the GOJ realizes the pain still felt by many surviving U.S. POWs and their family members today. In addition to offering an apology, the GOJ also invited last year, for the first time, several U.S. POWs to Japan for an exchange program of reconciliation and remembrance.

**“The Descendants of the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor applaud Representative Honda’s House Resolution commending the Japanese government’s apology to former prisoners of war and its establishment of a visitation program,” said Jan Thompson, President of the POWs descendants group, and the daughter of POW survivor and Kansas City native Robert Thompson, who survived the infamous “Hell Ship” journey on the Oryoku Maru to Japan. “As the daughter of an American POW who witnessed the official apology and visited Japan during the first year of the Japanese/American POW Friendship Program, I can attest to the importance of continuing the program and expanding it to include educational initiatives and other remembrance efforts. It is our hope that Congress’ call for certain Japanese private firms to follow the Government of Japan’s example in acknowledging their misuse of POW labor will be an important step in establishing foundations dedicated to preserving the history of American prisoners of war of Imperial Japan.”**

The national Reserve Officers Association (ROA) and the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) also expressed support for Rep. Honda’s resolution honoring U.S. former POWs.

**“The Reserve Officers Association supports the continuing pursuit towards a global standard of proper treatment for prisoners of war. Nations that violate this standard must accept accountability for such transgressions,” said Executive Director Major General David R. Bockel, USA (Ret.). “The Reserve Officers Association approves of Japan’s renewed commitment to this standard and honors the service of these former POWs, whose sacrifice will never be forgotten.”**

NGAUS strongly supports Congressman Honda’s Resolution which dutifully reminds us that the service and extended suffering of our POWs in the Pacific theater during WWII must never be forgotten,” said Deputy Director of Legislation Peter J. Duffy, Colonel US Army (Ret.). “We are thankful for the apology from the government of Japan as a welcomed and healing gesture from a true friend whose population also suffered mightily from the war.”

The bipartisan resolution is supported by 15 original cosponsors of both parties.